



News Release

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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AIR FORCE RELEASES ALL SPECIALTIES FROM STOP-LOSS PROGRAM

CHARLESTON AFB, SC -- The last Charleston AFB officer and enlisted specialties on Stop-Loss will be released beginning Sept. 1.

In making the announcement, Secretary of the Air Force Dr. James G. Roche said the release will be phased in during a one-month period to allow both the Air Force and affected personnel time for transition.

"We have arrived at a new steady-state," Roche said. "Stop-Loss most certainly helped us get here successfully, but we had pledged all along that we wouldn't hold onto anyone longer than necessary."

Capt. Kevin Heckle, 437th Mission Support Squadron Military Personnel Flight commander, agreed with Roche.

"The conflict is not winding down, but it is in a more manageable state," said Heckle. "You can't keep a person on Stop-Loss forever."

"We had Stop-Loss to ensure there were forces available for the conflict," Heckle continued.

The release, which affects three officer and 15 enlisted specialties, will begin with people who had original retirement or separation dates prior to April 1. They will be able to leave beginning Sept. 1. During the second phase, individuals with retirement or separation dates between April 1 and Sept. 30 can be released. In the final phase, anyone with a retirement or separation date of Oct. 1 or later can separate at his or her established date.

Senior Airman Dee Holman, 437th MSS retirements and separations clerk, said there were about 45 CAFB members who have their date of separation before the end of Jan. 2003.

"We'll have a suspense time for everyone to elect a DOS," said Holman. "Once they elect a DOS, they will be contacted by my office for an outprocessing briefing."

Holman said members are able to outprocess on their scheduled dates.

"Take in to consideration terminal leave and outprocessing days," said Holman. "It's up to the member how fast they outprocess."

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Members can request to remain on active duty up to five months to transition to civilian life and use accrued leave. The release does not apply to airmen who are currently deployed in support of operations Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom; all deployed personnel will remain subject to Stop-Loss as long as they are deployed. Upon completion of deployment, people will have up to five months to transition.

Even if a separation date is set, Holman said members can still remain in the Air Force.

"Enlisted members must withdraw their retirements or choose to reenlist if they want to stay in," Holman said. "Officers need only pull their separation dates to stay."

Stop-Loss was implemented shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks to meet unprecedented mission requirements. The process has been reviewed every 60 days.

"We were very aware of the sacrifice our airmen and their families were making," Roche said. "Service before self is an Air Force core value, and their performance illustrated that."

Heckle said Stop-Loss can still be reinstated, and since it is canceled active-duty troops could feel the backlash.

"More active-duty (members) will be deployed," said Heckle. "The overseas deployment requirement won't draw down due to fewer forces."

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